

Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation Between Sunni Muslim Scholars, Organizations, and Students of Sacred Knowledge

Hold fast to the Rope of Allah, all together, and be not divided. (Qur'an, 3:103)

Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah; then He will inform them of what they used to do. (Qur'an, 6:159)

In light of the Divine Word, we recognize that the historical nature of Sunni Islam is a broad one that proceeds from a shared respect for the Qur'an and Sunnah, a shared dependence on the interpretations and derivations of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them), and a shared respect for the writings of a vast array of scholars who have been identified by their support for and affiliation with the Sunni Muslims and have been accepted as the luminaries of Sunni Islam - as broadly defined.

Likewise, detailed discussions in matters of theology are the specific domain of trained specialists, and proceed on the basis of well-defined principles and methodologies, which are beyond the knowledge of the generality of Muslims.

Our forebears in faith, with all the dedication, brilliance and sincerity clearly manifested in their works, have debated and discussed abstruse and complex issues of creed and practice, and have failed in most instances to convince their opponents of the veracity and accuracy of their positions.

The average Muslim is only responsible for knowing the basics of creed as they relate to a simple belief in Allah, His Angels, Scriptures, the Prophets and Messengers, the Last Day, and the Divine Decree.

Recognizing that the specter of sectarianism threatens to further weaken and debilitate our struggling Muslim community at this critical time in human affairs, and recognizing that Allah, Exalted is He, has given the Muslim community in the West a unique historical opportunity to advance the cause of peace, cooperation, and goodwill amongst the people of the world, we the undersigned respectfully:

- Urge Muslims to categorically cease all attacks on individual Muslims and organizations whose varying positions can be substantiated based on the broad scholarly tradition of the Sunni Muslims. We especially urge the immediate cessation of all implicit or explicit charges of disbelief;
- Urge Muslim scholars and students of sacred knowledge to take the lead in working to end ad hominem attacks on other scholars and students; to cease unproductive, overly polemical writings and oral discourse; and to work to stimulate greater understanding and cooperation between Muslims, at both the level of the leadership and the general community;
- Urge Muslims in the West, especially our youth, to leave off unproductive and divisive discussions of involved theological issues that are the proper domain of trained specialists, and we especially discourage participation in those internet chat rooms, campus discussion groups, and other forums that only serve to create ill-will among many Muslims, while fostering a divisive, sectarian spirit;

-Urge all teachers to instruct their students, especially those attending intensive programs, to respect the diverse nature of our communities and to refrain from aggressive challenges to local scholars, especially those known for their learning and piety;

- Urge our brothers and sisters in faith to concentrate on enriching their lives by deepening their practice of Islam through properly learning the basics of the faith, adopting a consistent regimen of Qur'anic recitation, endeavoring to remember and invoke Allah in the morning and evening, learning the basics of jurisprudence, attempting to engage in voluntary fasting as much as possible, studying the Prophetic biography on a consistent basis, studying the etiquettes that guide our interactions with our fellow Muslims, and the performance of other beneficial religious acts, to the extent practical for their circumstances;

- Finally, we urge the Believers to attempt to undertake individual and collective actions that will help to counter the growing campaign of anti-Islamic misinformation and propaganda that attempts to portray our religion as a violence-prone relic of the past unsuitable for modern society, and by so doing justify indiscriminate wars against Muslim peoples, occupation of Muslim lands, and usurpation of their resources.

Saying this, we do not deny the reality of legitimate differences and approaches, nor the passionate advocacy of specific positions based on those differences. Such issues should be rightfully discussed observing established rules of debate. However, we urge the above measures to help prevent those differences from destroying the historical unity and integrity of the Muslim community, and creating irreparable divisions between our hearts. Further, we do not deny the urgency, especially in light of the situation in Iraq, of efforts to foster greater cooperation between diverse Muslim communities. Hence, this document should not be seen as negating any statements, or declarations designed to foster greater peace and harmony between diverse Muslim communities. However, we feel, as Sunni Muslims, a pressing need to first set our own affairs in order.

In conclusion, having called our brothers and sisters to act on these points, we, the undersigned, pledge to be the first to actively implement them in response to the Divine Word:

Do you enjoin righteousness on the people and refuse to follow it yourselves and all along you are reciting the scripture!? Will you not reflect? (Qur'an (2:44)

We ask Allah for the ability to do that which He loves. And Allah alone is the Grantor of Success.

Signed,

Abdelrahman Helbawi, Abdul Karim Khalil, Abdullah Adhami, Abdurraheem Green, Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf Mangera, Abu Aaliyah Surkheel Sharif, Abu Eesa Niamatullah, Aisha Faleh AlThani, Asma Mirza, Cheikhna B. Bayyah, Dawood Yasin, Ebadur Rahman, Faraz Rabbani, Fuad Nahdi, Gul Mohammad, Haitham al-Haddad, Hamza Yusuf, Hasan al-Banna, Ibrahim Osi-Efa, Jihad Hashim Brown, M. Abdul Latif Finch, M. Afifi al-Akiti, Mehdi Kader, Mokhtar Maghroui, Muhammad Alshareef, Muhammad Ash-Shaybani, Muhammad ibn Adam, Omar Qureshi, S. Abdal-Hakim Jackson, Shamira Chothia Ahmed, Siddique Abdullah, Suhaib Webb, Tahir Anwar

Talal Al-Azem, Tanveer Hussain, Tawfique Chowdhury, Usama Canon, Usama Hasan,
Walead Mosaad, Yahya Rhodus, Yasir Qadhi, Zaid Shakir